

PRACTICAL CLINICAL BIOCHEMISTRY. By Harold Varley, M.Sc., F.R.I.C. Second Edition. (Pp. vii + 635; figs. 78. 42s.) London: Heinemann, 1958.

SINCE publication in 1954 of the first edition of "Varley" it has become a standard laboratory text for all clinical biochemists. It is, therefore, most gratifying that in this second edition the work is brought up to date without any sacrifice of those characteristics which made such an impression in 1954. The book contains all the methods that a clinical chemist could expect to use in a teaching hospital laboratory in sufficient detail to enable them to be set up without reference in most cases to the original article. In spite of this, each section is provided with an extensive bibliography for those seeking information. The opening sections on the collection and preparation of specimens is particularly useful as is the appendix on volumetric standards, indicators, and buffers.

The new material in this edition is the hormone section, an account of the hydroxyindoles and one of the transaminases. The treatment of electrophoresis has been completely expanded and now forms a valuable description of the available techniques. All this new material is of the high standard which is a constant feature of this text.

There are, however, criticisms of detail. Present-day laboratory practice has led to the almost complete abandonment of visual colorimeters and it seems unnecessary to perpetuate them in what is virtually a new work. It is also hardly in keeping with modern practice to continue to describe methods for faecal fat estimation based on the use of dried faeces. In an attempt presumably to keep down the cost of the book, the quality of the paper used is very poor and might not be sufficiently serviceable for a book which will be in regular use at the bench. The reviewer's copy also contained one section which had been inadequately bound and became free at the first reading.

These minor criticisms do not, however, detract materially from what is undoubtedly one of the most valuable laboratory textbooks in this subject. D. W. N.

AIDS TO NEUROLOGY. By E. A. Blake Pritchard, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. Second Edition. (Pp. 480; illustrated. 15s.) London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1959.

THIS is the second edition of a book which was first published in 1932. It is the author's intention to "provide an introduction to the basic essentials of neurology for students in the earlier years" of their training. He believes that a knowledge of anatomy and physiology is subordinate to clinical observation and that in the majority of nervous disorders the symptoms cannot be explained in terms of well-defined disturbances of physiology. As a result of this policy the clinical description of disease is more detailed than might be expected in a book of this size, but anatomy and physiology are relegated to the last chapter, and clinical methods are found in an appendix of five pages.

However suitable this lay-out may have been twenty-seven years ago, the reviewer feels that more account might have been taken of current opinion on medical education in which the preclinical sciences are designed to lay a firm foundation for clinical practice.

The facts are presented in a relatively dogmatic manner and there is little or no speculative discussion. One or two misleading statements are to be found. The most obvious example is in a table showing the relative incidence of "cerebral tumours" (where the author is clearly referring to "intracranial tumours") expressed in percentages (notwithstanding that the given figures add up to 117). In this table pituitary gland neoplasms comprise 20 "per cent." of all tumours. No warning is given that this figure is exceptionally high because it was taken from the experience of Hanvy Cushing, who, owing to his particular interest in this field, attracted a greater proportion of patients with pituitary tumour than would be seen in a general hospital.

The text is readable with no attempt at economy in words, and clarity is enhanced by paragraph headings and enumerated lists of salient points.

Prospective purchasers should not be deceived by the apparent size of this book, for it contains no less than 150,000 words, which may be compared with 180,000 words in the other famous textbook of neurology emanating from University College Hospital.